

Some Observations on the Fauna of the Maldive Islands

PART V—FISHES

BY

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(With a plate)

[Continued from Vol. 55 (2): 220]

The small collection of fishes made by Major W. W. A. Phillips from the Maldive Islands is of some interest as, with the exception of Deraniyagala's publication in 1956, little has been published on the fishes of this area for almost fifty years.

121 species had previously been recorded from these Islands and this figure is now increased to 128, seven of the eleven species here reported on being new records for this area.

In this paper, Major Phillips's notes are placed in square parentheses at the end of the systematic matter and are initialed 'W.W.A.P.' All the specimens were taken in North Malé Atoll.

APODES

MURAENIDAE

Gymnothorax meleagris (Shaw & Nodder): Moray Eel

Shaw & Nodder 1795 Nat. Miscell. 7; A2 pl.220.

1 specimen, 235 mm. total length.

Widely distributed throughout the Indo-Pacific including the Red Sea. Attains a length of about four feet. New record.

[Common on the southern reef of Malé Island; the principal food of the Eastern Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea rectirostris*).—W.W.A.P.]

Gymnothorax pictus (Ahl): Painted Moray Eel

Ahl 1789 Spec. ichtyol. de Mur. et Ophich. Inaug. Dissert. Uppsala: 6.

1 specimen, 350 mm. total length.

Widely distributed throughout the Indo-Pacific and has been recorded from the Red Sea. Reaches a length of two to three feet.

[Caught on the southern reef of Malé Island at low tide.—W.W.A.P.]

Gymnothorax brummeri (Blkr.): Brummer's Moray Eel

Bleeker 1858 Nat. Tijdschr. Ned. Indie 17: 137.

1 specimen, 535 mm. total length.

Indo-Pacific. This species is apparently quite rare in the Maldives. Attains a length of two to three feet. New record.

[The only specimen seen; caught while fishing in the Fishery Harbour. Reported by the Maldivians to be a rare species.—W.W.A.P.]

Gymnothorax boschi (Blkr.): Bosch's Moray Eel

Bleeker 1853 Verh. Bat. Gen. 25: 52.

1 specimen, 330 mm. total length.

Occurring generally throughout the Indo-Pacific and reaching a length of over two feet. New record.

[Taken on the southern reef of Malé Island, at low tide.—W.W.A.P.]

OPHICHTHIDAE

Myrichthys colubrinus (Boddaert): Serpent Eel

Boddaert 1781 Neue Nord. Beitrage 2: 56 pl.2 fig. 3.

1 specimen, 460 mm. in total length.

This species is widely distributed in the tropical Indo-Pacific, including the Red Sea. The striking colour pattern of the alternate light and dark vertical bands is subject to considerable variation. Attains a length of three feet.

[Caught inside the reef of Hululé Island, North Malé Atoll; not so common as the following species.—W.W.A.P.]

Leiuranus semicinctus (Lay & Bennett): Half-banded Serpent Eel

Lay & Bennett 1839 in Beechey's Voyage; 66 pl. 20 fig. 4.

7 specimens ranging in length from 236-480 mm.

Widely distributed throughout the Indo-Pacific. This is an agile fish, which frequently burrows in the sand. Reaches a length of one to two feet. New record.

[Moderately plentiful on the southern reef of Malé Island. Seen moving slowly amongst the low-growing sea-weed, in pools left by the receding tide.—W.W.A.P.]

SOLENICHTHYES

SYNGNATHIDAE

Corythoichthys fasciatus (Gray): Banded Pipe-fish

Gray 1830-32 Illustr. Indian Zool. 1: 89 figs. 2 and 2a.

4 specimens, ranging in length from 68-99 mm.

This is a small species, reaching a length of six to seven inches, found generally throughout the Indo-Pacific. Has been recorded from the Red Sea. New record.

[Plentiful in small pools, with sandy bottoms, on the southern reef of Malé Island, at low tide.—W.W.A.P.]

PERCOMORPHI

SCOMBROIDEA

ISTIOPHORIDAE

Istiophorus gladius Bloch : Sail fish

Bloch 1793 Nat. ausl. Fische 7 : 81 pl. 345

Maldivian Name : Fung Hibar

Recorded from photographs of specimens, taken by W.W.A.P. Open water fishes, found in most warm seas. Attains a length of about 12 feet.

[Plentiful in the seas around Malé ; frequently brought to the fish market for sale.—W.W.A.P.]

Makaira marlina Jordan & Evermann : Black Marlin

Jordan & Evermann 1926 Occ. Pap. Acad. Sci. Calif. No. 12 : 59
17.

Maldivian Name : Hibar

Recorded from photographs of specimens, taken by W.W.A.P.

Open water fishes, widely distributed in most warm seas. Attains a length of about 14 feet.

[Plentiful in the seas around Malé ; frequently brought in to the fish market.—W.W.A.P.]

BLENNIOIDEA

CARAPIDAE

Encheliophis (Jordanicus) gracilis (Blkr.) : Fierasfer

Bleeker 1856 Nat. Tijdschr. Ned. Inde. 11 : 105.

2 specimens.

Distributed throughout the Indo-Pacific and has also been recorded from the Red Sea. These interesting fishes normally live in the body cavity of a host, usually a holothurian. This particular species has been reported as inhabiting the body cavity of a starfish. It reaches a length of about nine inches. New record.



Sail-fish in the Fish-market, Malé



Bonito (*Enthynnus* sp.) caught in the lagoon of North Malé Atoll

Photos : W. W. A. Phillips